

# ‘It’s... The Beatles!’ A Cultural reflection of the 1960s through the music of ‘The Beatles’

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Many people talk at great length about the importance of musical acts, and their impact on various areas of the cultures they were around in, but no worthwhile discussion will ignore the importance of The Beatles.

The Beatles were incredibly important to defining, and later understanding, the zeitgeist of western culture in the 1960s. There are many sources of information on this time period, and the unique cultures that grew from it, but any Beatles’ album is just as engaging as any journal in discovering the mood of Western culture in the period of the 1960s.



The Beatles.

Unless you have the musical knowledge of someone whose been hermitic since 1948, you’ll most likely have

come into contact with The Beatles, or listened to someone greatly influenced by them.

Coming from Liverpool, John, Paul, George and Ringo were four musicians who went on to be widely regarded as the finest band ever, spending over a 1000 collective weeks on the UK charts, and having sold, at minimum, around 500 million records.

One of the key elements to making their music so seminal and important though was the engagement it created; an engagement directly related to the fact that the Beatles music highly mirrored popular culture throughout the sixties. To look at the zeitgeist or culture of the 1960s is to look at The Beatles, and vice versa.

At the start of the decade, when *Please Please Me* was released in 1962, Western culture was still growing from the birth of 'Rock n Roll', with stars such as Elvis, Little Richard, Chuck Berry and The Dominos all galvanising a musical reinvigoration, with a sense of rebellion and change resulting from the new sound.

From *Please Please Me* through to *Help!* The Beatles managed to capture this essence in bouncy, short and rock-poppy songs revolving around the concepts of fun, debauchery and love. Songs such as 'Another Girl' and 'All My Loving' replicated the care free attitudes symbolised by this music, and symbolised cultural

phenomena of the time, such as town-hall rock and fad dance crazes (think *Twist and Shout*).

Yet as the decade progressed, a sense of maturity was brewing; the Vietnam War was continuing to produce sentiments across the globe of distaste for American Imperialism, and Western culture was moving to a more psychedelic phase, where rebellion were maturing into free will, peace, and love of all, signified by the 'hippy' movement and the 1966 'Summer of Love'.

Not to retreat to the musical shadows, the Beatles simultaneously matured with said culture; their music became more mature and focused; from *Revolver* through to *Magical Mystery Tour* (with particular note for the seminal *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, The Beatles further proved themselves to be masters of music, but, more importantly, voices for the masses.

Their music perfectly supplemented the views and values found in this new 'free love' culture immersing America and Britain, whether it was from 'With a Little Help from My Friends', or the downright revolutionary experimentation found in 'Tomorrow Never Knows'. The Beatles found themselves as vanguards for a cultural revolution, symbolised through a block of several albums that proved to be as mature as they were distinctly brilliant.

As well as this, the inventive and new sound created in albums such as 'Revolver' and 'Sgt. Peppers...' owed a lot to the use of LSD among other hallucinogenic drugs, which were becoming prominent in both the USA and UK. As the decade drew to a close, with less of an emphasis being placed on the hedonistic values seen in the middle of the decade, so too did the music of The Beatles. *Let It Be* and *Abbey Road* exerted musical maturity, and almost symbolised the climb down idealistic pursuit, and more towards a sense of maturity.

The Beatles were an important band. If not just important, they were incredibly important, and if not just that, then the most important. Their music is still symbolic of a period of history that was culturally unrivalled for its progression, distinct values and remembrance, with it all being played out to the soundtrack of four guys from Liverpool.

Many will tell you that, if you want to understand the cultural foundations of various parts of the 1960s in America and the UK, you should read an article or two about it. But if you want to have a flavour of the motifs and values, you don't have to search a Beatles record too much to find one.